

The Prophet Amos

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Text:

This morning I would like to share with you a sermon I have been a long time getting up the nerve to give. It is not that it is so controversial, but because it tells a story of a wonderful man, a prophet named Amos. What makes it so difficult in the giving of it is the fact that I shall present it in story form. I have a copy of a description of Amos's sermon by Henry Morgenstern. I am using some of it and taking the liberty of writing some of my own description.

Amos was considered to be one of the new breed of prophet. He denied that he was a prophet. Nothing is really known about him except what we can get from his book. His autobiography is found in Amos 8,10 and 17. The name Amos means burden bearer. He was a southerner who had his entire ministry in the northern kingdom. In fact, his was the shortest ministry on record. All he gave was one complete sermon. Amos was a native of a tiny village southeast of Bethle-
~~HE WAS CALLED THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL~~ hem. He had two part time jobs, neither of which was a good one. He was a shepherd and a fig stabber. What this consisted of was working in the early spring. When the sycamore figs were beginning to fill out and were getting nice and juicy, but hadn't started to ripen yet, he would wander about and with a good sharp stick punch holes in the figs to let the juice run out. This caused the fig to wither up and it was then used for cattle feed. These may not have been very glamourous jobs but through it all Amos was a very courageous man, very intellectual and a magnificent poet.

The reigns of Jerabohim and Azzihah were not only lengthy and prosperous, but they were reigns of peace. Great riches were accumulated by a few and social injustices prevailed. The leaders were arrogant and there was vast social discontent. Religious observances were still held, but religion was not important for many were greedy and power bent. One day in his role as a shepherd Amos went on a business trip to Samaria to sell his wool. While he was there he probably experienced some of the unrest and there he saw ~~the~~ all around him the ignorance, indulgence and vice. He probably made an annual trip there each year and saw the rich getting richer and the poor sinking deeper into poverty. When he returned home and out in the fields with his sheep he had time to brood and to

and to think of his experiences in Samaria. Then one year he happened to be in Samaria at the time of the New Years festival and so he went to Bethel along with the great ~~wrowds~~ there in the Temple to celebrate the coming of the new year.

All through the night the people had been gathering in the Temple courtyard. This was the time of the split and there were ^{kingdoms} two Temples, one in Bethel and one in Jerusalem. One in the northern kingdom and one in the southern kingdom. Eagerly and anxiously they were waiting for the coming of light. The great moment would come when the rising sun would cast its first rays through the open doors of the Temple and shine upon the altar. That was the highpoint of this celebration. But all is quiet as the faithful wait int the courtyard in the darkness. But suddenly in the darkest of the early morning, about a half hour before the coming of the dawn a voice arose. A strange voice from out of that vast and milling throng. And so Amos began his sermon. "Thus says the Lord; For the three crimes ~~of Remmeh~~ the four crimes of Damascus I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have thrashed Gilead with iron threshing sledges, I am going to hurl fire on the house of Hazael to burn up Ben-hadads palces; I am going to break the gate bars of Damascus, and cut down the one enthroned at Bikath-aven and the sceptered one at ~~Beth~~ Beth-eden; and the people of Aram shall go captive to Kir. The Lord has spoken." That was his first utterance and of course he had attracted the attention of the people. Here was a man who was evidently a prophet speaking in the name of Yahweh and proclaiming the doom of Israels arch enemy. This was just fine because the people of Israel never did like the people of Damascus. They were very arrogant and always trying to get tribute out of Israel. They were just getting what was coming to them, Then after a moment of silence the voice continued. "For the three crimes, the four crimes of Gaza I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have deported entire nations as slaves to Edom, I am going to hurl fire on the walls of Gaza to burn up her palaces. I am going to cut down the one enthroned at Ashdod and the sceptred one at Ashkelon; I am going to turn my hand against Ekron until the last of the Philistines is dead. The Lord has spoken." Here is another of Israel's enemies condemned, and then he continues. He speakes of the condemnation of Israel's neighbors and enemies. Chapter 1, 9 to 15, and 2 to 5. Then he talks to Israel. He had told all about their enemies and the people were swelling up with pride and poking one another and saying, "Now listen what is going to happen

to our next door neighbor. But suddenly he is talking about Israel and he has the nerve to do it here in their royal shrine, in the cathedral church of the capital ~~THE PEOPLE ARE STUPID & LISTEN MUTELY AND~~ ty. ~~But~~ the voice drones on, "For the three crimes, the four crimes of Israel I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have sold the virtuous man for silver and the poor man for a pair of sandals, because they trample on the heads of ordinary people and push the poor out of their path, because father and son have both resorted to the same girl, profaning my Holy name, because they stretch themselves out by the side of every altar on clothes acquired as pledges, and drink the wine of the people they have fined in the house of their God, The Lord has spoken." Then he goes on for one more stanza, "Your many transgressions I know and how great your sins. The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, surely I will never forget your deeds. Go to Bethel and sin, to Gilgal and sin your hardest. Offer your sacrifices each morning and your tithes on the third day, burn leavened dough as a sacrifice with praise, announce your voluntary offerings make them public, for this is what makes you happy sons of Israel. The Lord has spoken." While the hushed multitude stands stunned by his prophecy Amos hits where it hurts the most, he takes a swipe at the women, who were mostly wealthy society ladies, "Listen to this you cows of Bashan living in the mountains of Samaria, oppressing the needy, crushing the poor, saying to your husbands, 'Bring us something to drink.' The Lord Yahweh swears by His Holiness; the days are coming to you now when you will be dragged out with hooks, the very last of you with prongs. Out you will go, each by the nearest breach in the wall, to be driven all the way to Hermon. The Lord has spoken." And just as he finishes speaking this, the first light of dawn breaks. He can be seen standing in a far corner ~~by the~~ in the shadow of a large column. And as the light grows in brightness and dispels the shadows there stands a very rude looking, rough clothed unkempt hill billy preacher. At ^{Amaziah} this the Temple priest ~~is~~ enraged and he shrieks, "You dreamer, be off to Judah and earn your living there. Play the preacher there, but never here at Bethel. For this is the royal shrine, this is the national Temple." This was the end of Amos's ministry. Perhaps the shortest on record. Nothing more was ever heard from him. The book of Amos has undergone more editorial change than any other book of the Bible. This means that other people have added their thoughts and comments and therefore his message is rather difficult to recognize as a sermon. It is rather ^{TO HEAR A SERMON LIKE IT.} lengthy and I am certain that not too many of us would sit still that long.

There are arguments pro and con about the message and the purpose of the prophets. There are those who believe that the prophets were predicting the future, such as speaking to us today. Then there are those who believe that the prophets were speaking to their own age and their own day. We can take our choice as to what we believe. I personally believe that they spoke to their age. But how about those prophecies that seem to be speaking just to us today? History has a way of being repeated. Man today is no different than he was in the Day of the prophets. He still does the same sinning as then. He is still as evil as he was then, so we can find many parallels in the Bible to suit our times. If we look about us in our nation today we can see that the prophecy of Amos would suit us perfectly. We are an arrogant and proud people. We refuse to give to God what we should. We want to give just so much and keep the rest for ourselves. We have exploited the poor and the downtrodden. All of these things is what Amos was hitting at. So when some preacher comes on the radio and says God was talking about 20th century America when he said such and so in Amos, before we turn him off or pass him off as some kind of nut, let us think ^{INSTEAD} that ~~perhaps~~ God is still speaking to mankind through His Holy word. We can interpret it as we will, but God has spoken through men before and he will continue to do so as long as there is someone who will listen. ^{AN EXAMPLE OF A} Billy Graham is ^{THE} a modern day prophet. But when he speaks there are those who scoff and sneer and pass him off as a kook or a nut. He is out of his tree they say. But God is speaking through him as he does through anyone who will speak for Him. There is a poem or a hymn that states something like, "God has no hands but ours, no ears, no feet, etc. meaning that we are the instruments of God. That it is we who must do the working ^{THE} and exertion for God. If this is our duty then we should be at it. And if we should be at it we must prepare ourselves for it. So I ask that you join me in prayer ^{we} as close using a beloved hymn as our prayer, let us pray. Pg. 256 Hymnal

DENMARK MANOR
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ralph Link Guest Speaker
Mary Esler Organist
Paul Brinker Choir Director

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
January 18, 1970 11:00 A.M.

WE GATHER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S CALL

PRELUDE No. 29
*HYMN OF PRAISE
*CALL TO WORSHIP

*CONFESSON OF SINS

Our Father God, we acknowledge and confess our many sins which we have committed by thought, word, and deed, against you and our neighbors. Have mercy on us for the sake of your Son our Savior. Forgive us all our sins and offenses, and strengthen us by your Holy Spirit; that we may hereafter love and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*KYRIE ELEISON
*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

*THE PRAISE

Pastor: Praise you the Lord.
People: The Lord's Name be praised.

*GLORIA PATRI

ANTHEM "Walk With Us, Lord" Margaret Lokey
WE HEAR AND RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

COLLECT

SCRIPTURE Joes 2: 26 - 32

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE No. 202
1st & 4th Verse with Amen

SERMON "The Prophet Amos"
*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH Statement of Faith
*HYMN No. 272

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.
People: And with your spirit.
Pastor: Let us pray.

PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM Page 12

PRAYER RESPONSE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERTORY

*The Presentation - The Doxology
*The Lord's Prayer

*HYMN No. 380

*BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

OUR WORSHIP HAS ENDED - OUR SERVICE BEGINS

*denotes standing

Pastor here 1/17/70
The flowers on the altar are given to the glory of God by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Martin in memory of Myrtle A. Glunt.

We welcome to our pulpit this morning Mr. Ralph Link from Wheeling, W. Va. He will be with us next Sunday, also.

<u>Greeters</u>	Mr. & Mrs. Herb Good
<u>Nursery</u>	Pauline Marcinkevic
	Doris Branhoover
<u>Acolyte</u>	Leann Comfy

SUNDAY, January 11, 1970

<u>Regular Offering</u>	\$273.55
<u>Attendance</u>	123

TODAY, Annual Congregational Meeting to begin with a covered dish dinner following the worship service.

MONDAY, Jan. 19, 6:30 P.M. Jr. Choir Practice
7:00, Slimnastics
7:30, Christian Education Meeting

TUESDAY, Jan. 20, 6:30, Boy's Recreation

WEDNESDAY, Jan. 21, 6:30, Girl's Recreation

THURSDAY, Jan. 22, 6:30, Young Men's Rec.

FRIDAY, Jan. 23, 8:00 P.M. Mission Circle Class Meeting

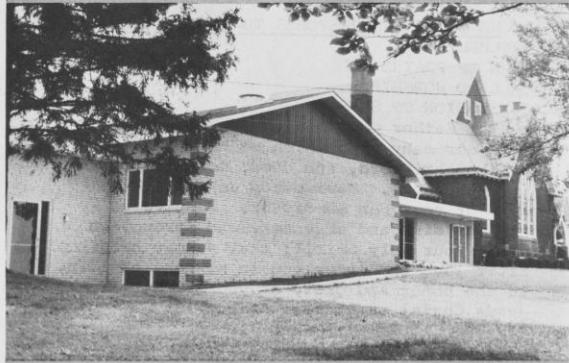
January 26, 1970 Winter Youth Rally (see letter posted on bulletin board)

February 1, Short Congregational Meeting to vote on Constitution Revisions

February 2, Stanley Party in Fellowship Hall

Denmark Manor

United Church of Christ



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